

WASHINGTON POST

1 March 1985

ARTICLE APPEARED

ON PAGE A 6

State Dept. Bureau Bars Talks With Former Chief

Reporter's Story Called 'Harmful' to U.S.

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The director of the State Department Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs has barred his staff from talking to New York Times reporter Leslie H. Gelb, and has ordered a photograph of Gelb, who once headed the bureau, removed from the wall of his waiting room.

A State Department spokesman said yesterday that Secretary George P. Shultz stands behind the order of Lt. Gen. John T. Chain Jr., which came in response to a Feb. 13 article by Gelb reporting what Chain called "classified information, the release of which is harmful and damaging to the United States."

"An American, particularly one who has served in a responsible national security position . . . , has a responsibility not to take action which is harmful to U.S. security," Chain said in a statement.

Gelb reported that the United States had contingency plans to place nuclear weapons in Canada, Iceland, Bermuda and Puerto Rico—information that had been published in part in Iceland, Britain, Bermuda and Canada.

Gelb wrote that the contingency plans had been prepared without notifying officials of countries

where the weapons were to be deployed. It also said the plans had come under sharp parliamentary debate in Canada and Iceland after their disclosure in reports there.

Yesterday, in the empty frame where Gelb's photo once was displayed among former directors of the bureau, there was this notation: "Removed For Cause. The P.M. Director, 1977 to 1979, did willingly, willfully, and knowingly publish, in 1985, classified information the release of which is harmful and damaging to the country." Gelb's name was not mentioned.

A.M. Rosenthal, executive editor of The Times, said yesterday in an interview that Shultz had asked him to withhold Gelb's story. Rosenthal said the conversation was "very pleasant, very civilized," and said he responded that the information already had been printed abroad, and "certainly the Russians knew about it since they read the foreign papers.

"So as far as I could see, the only people who had reason to be interested in the story and who didn't know about it were the American people," Rosenthal said.

"I never heard another word," Rosenthal continued, "until this general kind of lost his head, at least I think he did."

Gelb was not available for comment.

Chain said in a statement:

"Unfortunately, it has become customary for some newspapers and journalists to print information which they know to be potentially damaging to the U.S. on the pretext that the public has a 'right to know,'

or that such information prevents governmental abuse of power

"I do respect a free press. I have many friends who are journalists and reporters. I have a policy to meet with any reporter who is referred to me [by] the bureau through Public Affairs. That list has now been narrowed by one."